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National Security Report

Background and Perspective on Important National Security and Defense Policy Issues

Royce Spencer, Chairman



U.S. Troops in Bosnia: Caught in the Quagmire?

Volume 1, Issue 1

January 1997

From the Chairman...

"As the one year milestone approaches, thousands of American soldiers remain in Bosnia, the costs of the mission have more than doubled, and its prospects for success have not brightened...."

"Operations like Bosnia are slowly diminishing the ability of our armed forces to meet the national military strategy. Important modernization and readiness programs are being mortgaged to pay for these indefinite 'contingency' missions...."

"One year into this operation, it is legitimate to ask whether the benefits of U.S. participation have outweighed the costs, and whether the American presence in Bosnia has helped to create the conditions for a just and lasting peace."

Bosnia—One Year Later

"While the large-scale fighting has ceased, the bitter divisions that gave rise to the conflict in the first place have intensified and are likely to remain for years. Human rights violations continue on all sides.... In reality, the Dayton accords have served to ratify the ethnic partition of the country...."

"In short, one year after Dayton, NATO is no closer to ensuring lasting peace in Bosnia and the United States is no closer to developing a credible exit strategy that will lead to the withdrawal of U.S. ground troops from that troubled land."

It is now more than one year since U.S. forces deployed to Bosnia as part of a multinational peace implementation force (IFOR). To date, the military aspects of the Dayton peace agreement have been completed, although violations continue to occur. These military aspects include the separation of the warring parties, the destruction or cantonment of heavy weapons, and the transfer of territories according to the provisions agreed upon in Dayton. What remains to be accomplished — and what is generally recognized as the more difficult goal — is the civilian and humanitarian rebuilding of Bosnia.

The Current Political Situation

Increasing difficulties in implementing the civilian aspects of the Dayton accord are raising questions about the long-term political and economic stability of this war-ravaged country. Human rights violations continue on all sides. Refugees are being prevented from returning to their homes. In the last few months, hundreds of Muslim homes have been destroyed by Serbs. Attacks on civilians by partisans remain commonplace. Political differences between Muslims and Croats have called into question the continued viability of the Bosnian Federation. War criminals remain at large and Islamic mujahedeen remain in the country, in

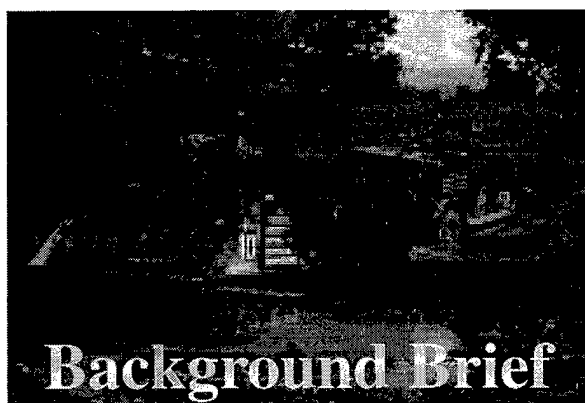
spite of the Dayton accord's requirement that they leave.

Nationwide municipal elections have been twice postponed because of massive voter registration fraud and irregularities and the threat of a Bosnian Serb boycott. The results of the presidential election in September — seen by

some as an important step toward reunifying the country — indicated the continued strength of nationalist candidates in the Muslim, Croat, and Serb com-

munities. Current Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, the top vote-getter, will head Bosnia's collective presidency for another two years. Momcilo Krajisnik, a nationalist Serb, and Kresimir Zubak, a Croat nationalist, will also serve on Bosnia's rotating presidential body.

These three victors each received strong majority support within their respective ethnic communities, and they embody the ethnic divisions that brought the country to war in the first place. This has led some observers to conclude that the divisions between Bosnia's ethnic groups remain sharp and to doubt the future viability of Bosnia as a multi-ethnic unitary state. In fact, the Serb member of Bosnia's rotating presidency refused to attend his own inaugural and swear allegiance to a unified Bosnia.



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U.S. Troop Deployments

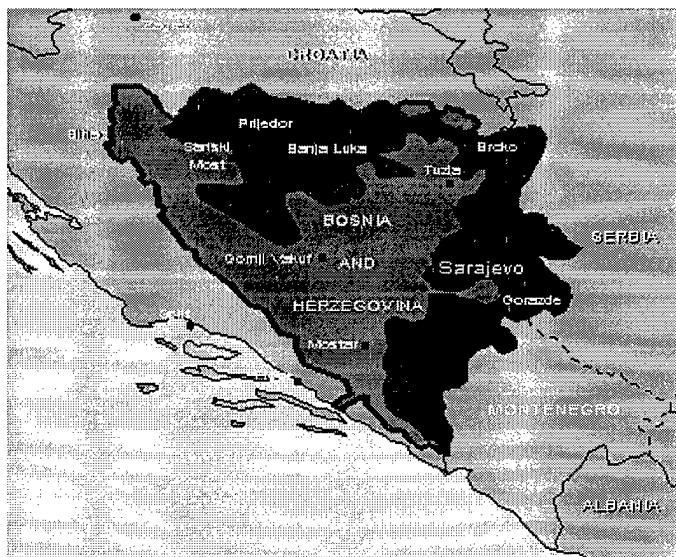
The Clinton Administration originally pledged to Congress that U.S. participation in the IFOR mission would last no longer than one year. President Clinton, in his address to the American people last December, stated that "the military mission can be accomplished in about one year." He reiterated this belief in a letter to House National Security Committee Chairman Floyd Spence on June 26, 1996. In April 1996, Under Secretary of State Peter Tarnoff testified before the House International Relations Committee that "our policy...is to have all U.S. forces out on or about the 14th of December."

Earlier this year, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Shalikashvili expressed his conviction that "America will not participate with military forces in Bosnia after the conclusion of this year. I cannot imagine circumstances changing in such a way that we would remain in Bosnia." However, increasing levels of violence and the potential for greater political instability have now led the Clinton Administration to decide that an extended U.S. military ground presence in Bosnia is required to guarantee stable conditions for the lagging civilian and humanitarian reconstruction effort. Secretary of Defense William Perry has called the Administration's prior assurances that the U.S. deployment would be limited to one year "an error in judgment." As he noted, "The conditions for peace still do not exist in Bosnia."

Currently, a "covering force" of 7,500 U.S. troops has been deployed to Bosnia to replace troops that are rotating out after their one-year tour is up and to assist in their withdrawal. These troops are likely to comprise the bulk of the 8,500 U.S. troops that President Clinton has declared will participate in a smaller 31,000-troop multinational follow-on peacekeeping presence in Bosnia. This follow-on "stabilization force," or "SFOR," will continue its mission until at least June 1998, with assessments of progress occurring at six-month intervals. The U.S. contingent of the SFOR may be reduced to 5,500, and the total SFOR to 13,500, after one year. Nevertheless,

the Administration has refused to set June 1998 as a firm deadline for withdrawal, implying that there is still no credible exit strategy to extricate U.S. forces from this war-ravaged country.

The prospect of a follow-on military peacekeeping force for Bosnia was discussed at a September 1996 NATO ministerial meeting in Norway. The decision to participate in Bosnia with U.S. ground forces for another eighteen months was made after a NATO study of several post-IFOR options, timed for



"I'm absolutely convinced that America will not participate with military forces in Bosnia after the conclusion of this year. I cannot imagine circumstances changing in such a way that we would remain in Bosnia."

— Statement by Joint Chiefs of Staff General John M. Shalikashvili, Washington Post, 4/3/96

completion after the U.S. presidential election. The options of continuing the current IFOR mission as currently structured or completely withdrawing were rejected by NATO ambassadors at a meeting in Brussels earlier this month. Some form of continued ground presence was seen as indispensable to the consolidation of peace in Bosnia. However, the Europeans again made it clear that they would not participate with forces on the ground unless the United

States did the same. To some observers, the decision to keep U.S. troops engaged in Bosnia appears more like the United States being led by the NATO alliance than leading it.

The Prospect of "Mission Creep"

Concern over extension of the U.S. military presence in Bosnia has been accompanied by confusion over the military mission and the prospect of "mission creep." Administration statements explicitly excluded using IFOR for civilian and humanitarian missions. In particular, General Shalikashvili ruled out the use of U.S. troops to seek out and arrest suspected war criminals, declaring that this "would, in fact, represent mission creep.... It is not IFOR's task." However, Secretary of State Christopher stated in June that "our troops will conduct more visible and proactive patrols throughout the country.... [which will] put war criminals at greater risk of apprehension."

The role of U.S. troops in providing assistance to war crimes investigators, including providing security for grave site investigators, has also been controversial. Then-IFOR commander Admiral Leighton Smith declared in January that "NATO is not going to provide specific security... for teams investigating these grave sites." Several weeks later, Secretary Perry stated that "we'll provide the security that allows them to do that.... I don't consider that mission creep."

More recently, reports have indicated that IFOR troops have been engaging in civilian-oriented activities, carrying out constabulary functions, searching for illegal weapons, and

"The conditions for peace still do not exist in Bosnia."

— *Statement by Secretary of Defense William Perry, Washington Post, 11/16/96*

assisting in the reconstruction of Bosnia's infrastructure. IFOR has reportedly had greater success in this regard than the civilian aid organizations that have been tasked with these responsibilities. The civilian rebuilding effort has been hindered by bureaucratic stonewalling and latent distrust among the parties, along with a shortfall in financial resources.

According to the Administration, the new SFOR will operate under guidelines similar to IFOR. It will have

a precise mission and well-defined rules of engagement. However, the strict military tasks outlined by the Dayton agreement have been completed. Because the focus of SFOR will be on ensuring the conditions for an effective rebuilding and rehabilitation of Bosnia's civilian infrastructure, the prospects for mission creep loom large. In particular, the SFOR missions to keep civil order, ensure freedom of movement, support the war crimes tribunal and provide security to the municipal elections — whenever they do take place — all carry potential for mission creep.

The "Arm and Train" Program

The first deliveries of arms and equipment to the Muslim-dominated Bosnian Federation under the "arm-and-train" program have taken place, including the shipment of U.S.-built M60A3 tanks and M16A2 rifles. However, the program has not acquired the broad-based support or financial backing that was originally hoped for. In particular, America's European allies have expressed uneasiness about arming

the Bosnian Federation. That uneasiness has been reinforced by the instability within Bosnia and the prospect of renewed conflict. Training of Federation forces within Bosnia under the arm-and-train program is also underway, and is being carried out by a private U.S. firm, Military Professional Resources, Inc. In spite of the Presidential certification that all foreign forces have left Bosnia — a necessary precondition for the initiation of the arm-and-train program — published reports continue to suggest the presence of foreign forces, particularly Iranian-backed Islamic mujahedeen, at various training camps located throughout the country.

Conclusion

As the United States transitions to a reduced, but longer-term military presence in Bosnia, significant questions remain over mission scope, duration, rules of engagement, exit strategy, and long-term political stability in Bosnia. These questions will likely feature prominently in the oversight activities of the 105th Congress.

As political difficulties mount in Bosnia and the expectation of a prompt American military exit evaporates, the costs of maintaining an armed U.S. presence on the ground will invariably escalate, adding to the debate over the temporary nature of "contingency" missions. From a strict monetary perspective, the costs of the Bosnia operation have increased substantially. The Administration's original estimate of \$1.5 billion through the end of 1996 grew to \$2.8 billion in April and has now reached more than \$3.2 billion. Deputy Secretary of Defense John White conceded to the House National Security Committee in September that "our initial estimates, as we know, were low...." The Administration has indicated to Congress that a supplemental funding request of over 2 billion is needed for the current SFOR operation, as the defense budget had projected an end to operations in Bosnia as of the first quarter of the fiscal year.

In addition, there are concerns that

the Bosnia operation has also compromised the ability of U.S. armed forces to meet the requirements of U.S. national security strategy. Despite a reduced U.S. presence in Bosnia, the requirement to rotate troops during the course of the 18-month mission, plus the ongoing presence in Macedonia, will tie



down virtually the entire U.S. Army garrison in Europe, as well as important stateside units necessary for contingency deployments. In addition, it is likely that U.S. Air Force and Marine units will continue to fly air cover over Bosnia. Some also believe the Administration has sacrificed necessary procurement, research and development, and training programs by reallocating defense resources in support of an indefinite contingency mission of questionable national security relevance. The

expanded U.S. presence in Bosnia will increase the strain on American soldiers and their families as it draws from limited defense resources available to support them.

Overall, the record of success of the Dayton peace agreement is decidedly mixed. Compliance by the parties has been neither uniform nor universal. The incidence of violence among the factions has disturbingly increased. There is little to suggest that the Bosnian people are ready to let go of their destructive hatreds. As Assistant Secretary of State John Kornblum stated, "...we have failed to change the hearts and minds of the people there."

It remains to be seen whether keeping Americans on the ground in Bosnia for a longer period of time will, in fact, accomplish this goal. Without a change in attitude among all the parties to the conflict, a true and lasting peace in Bosnia is unlikely to be realized anytime soon.

Update

The inaugural session of Bosnia's newly-formed joint government is held, three months after it was to have originally convened. President Alija Izetbegovic, the Muslim member of Bosnia's revolving tripartite presidency says, "We will request the return of people to their homes, freedom of movement, hunting of war criminals, and freedom of media."

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), who is responsible for overseeing and conducting elections in the region, calls upon Serbian President Milosevic to recognize the opposition electoral victories in 14 Serbian cities, including the capital, Belgrade.

Croatian President Tudjman attacks efforts by the United States to foster democracy in Croatia. He refers to private U.S. groups seeking democratic reform in Croatia as "foreign enemies." He also criticizes the U.S. Ambassador and the Voice of America for supporting the efforts of a new opposition publication.

Military officials and diplomats report that Yugoslavia has exceeded its requirement for reducing arms under the terms of an arms control agreement signed last June. However, officials report that the Bosnian Serbs are not in compliance with the agreement and are seeking to keep stockpiles well in excess of what the agreement allows.

Bosnia's governing Muslim party confirms that it received \$500,000 from Iran last spring. However, the Party for Democratic Action denies that a report by the CIA concludes that funds were used in support of President Izetbegovic's election campaign.

Secretary of Defense William J. Perry will officially turn over control to ex-Senator William S. Cohen (R-ME) at the end of this month if Cohen is confirmed by the Senate. One of Perry's concerns upon leaving office is the tension in Russia over NATO expansion: "I see some hard times ahead of us between now and July," when alliance representatives are scheduled to meet to admit new members.

Perry's departure, Cohen's pending arrival and internal Pentagon delays have slowed the effort to craft a new U.S. military strategy to replace the current "Bottom-Up Review." A review by the Joint Staff was slowed, as was the naming of an independent "National Defense Panel" mandated by Congress in the FY 1997 Defense Authorization Act. The panel was to be named by December 1, 1996. And the formal strategic review, called the Quadrennial Defense Review, is slated to be complete by May 15, but observers doubt that the deadline, also mandated by Congress, will be met. The cumulative effect of the delays is to ensure that the upcoming defense budget will be a "placeholder" budget, and that the real debate about U.S. defense strategy and force structure will be postponed until 1998.

A recent report released by the Pentagon states that Information Warfare in the future is a possible "electronic Pearl Harbor." Also stated in the report was that "there is a need for extraordinary action" and that currently, there "are ingredients in a recipe for a national security disaster." Also stated was that the United States military owns approximately 2.1 million computers and possesses around 10,000 local area networks, all of which could be crippled by information warfare.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin returns to the hospital on January 8, after showing early symptoms of pneumonia. He is to be hospitalized for a few days.

Moscow has agreed in principle to accept a cache of weapons-grade uranium from Georgia. Previously, Russian government officials had raised bureaucratic, technical, and financial issues obstructing the transfer to a safer facility in Russia. Georgia has offered the material for sale to foreign governments, claiming this would not violate the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, to which Georgia is a signatory.

Russian Defense Minister Igor Rodionov, in a December 21 television interview says "I think the Cold War is not yet over." Declaring "NATO enlargement to the east is unacceptable to Russia...There exist two countries with powerful nuclear potentials capable of destroying the globe and turning each other into dust. Is there a 100 percent guarantee that a possible conflict can be avoided?"

Japan and the U.S. are expected to hold top-level defense talks in the U.S. from late April to early May to mull closer defense cooperation in regional crises. The ministerial meeting is timed to come after the expected conclusion in April of talks on the review of bilateral defense guidelines. The U.S. and Japan want to strengthen the bilateral security alliance.

China's President Jiang Zemin says that the PRC intends to commission its first aircraft carrier by the year 2000. If successful, Beijing will have accomplished its goal of deploying an aircraft carrier five years ahead of its originally planned date.